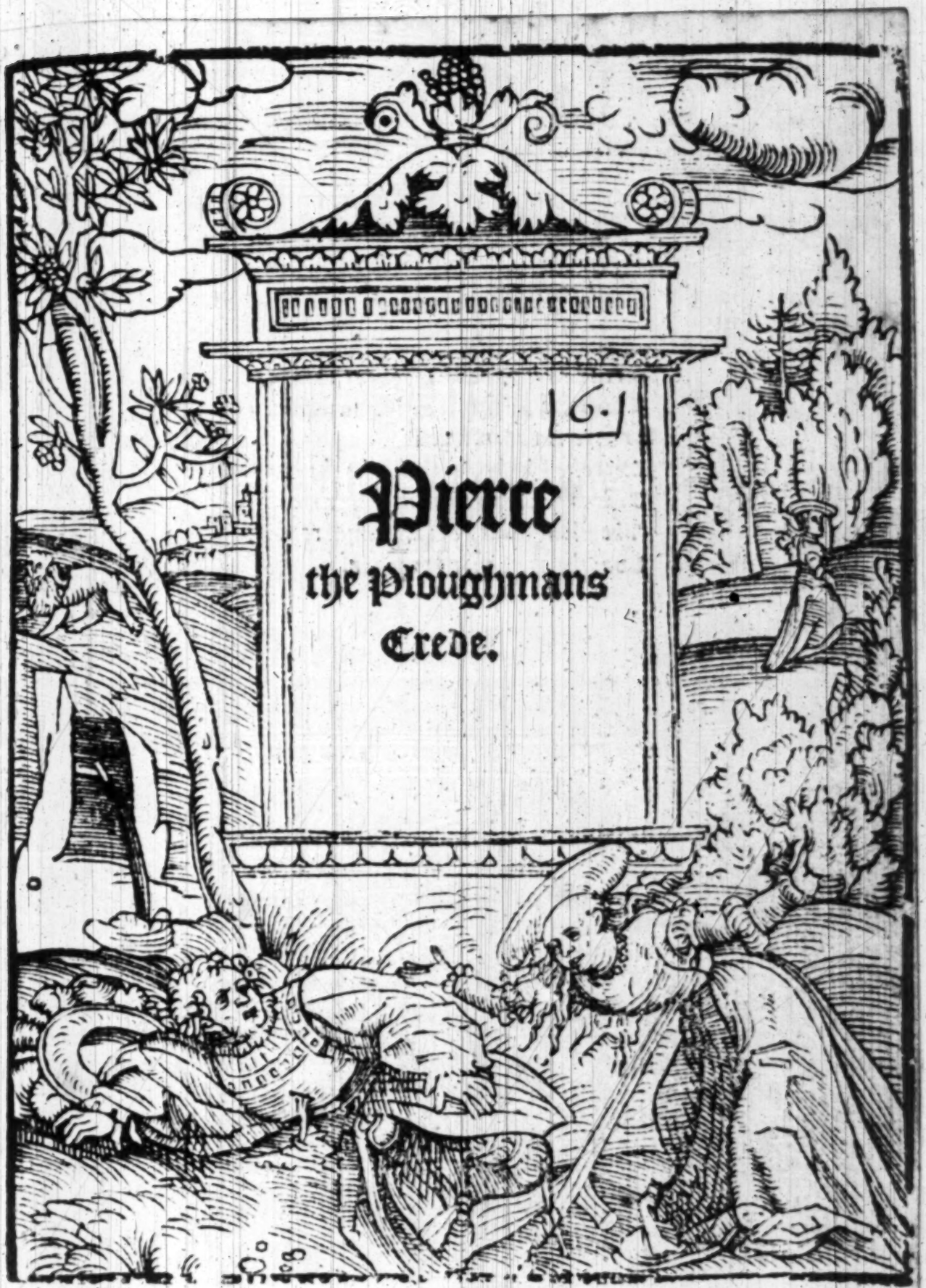
16.
Pierce
the Ploughmans
Crede.

To the Reader.

To read strange newes, desires manye,
Which at my hande they can not haue:
For here is but antiquitie
Expressed only, as tholde booke gaue.
Take in good part, and not deprawe
The Ploughmans Crede, ientyll reader:
Loo, this is all that I requyer.

Peres the Ploughmans
CREDE.

Cros & curteis Christ this begynnyng spede,
For the faders frendshipe, ỹ fourmed heauen,
& through ỹ special spirit ỹ sprōg of hē tweyne
And al in one godhed endles dwelleth:
A, and all myn A, b, c, after haue I lerned,
And patres i my pater noster, ich poynt after (other,
And after al, myne Aue marie, almost to the end,
But al my care is to comen, for I can nought my Crede:
Whan I shall shewen my shrift, shent mote I worthen,
The preeste wil me punyche, and penaunce entoyne,
The lengthe of a lenton, flesh moot I leue,
After that Estur is ycome, and that is hard fare,
And wedenes day ich wyke withouten fleshmete.
And also Jesu hymselfe, to the Jewes he saide,
He that leeueth nought on me, he leseth the blisse:
Therfor lerne the byleue leuest me were,
Gif any worldly wight wil me couthe,
Other lewed or lered, that lyueth thereafter
And fulliche folweth the feith and feyneth non other
That no worldeliche wele wilneth no tyme,
But liueth in louyng of God, and his lawe holdeth,
And for no gettyng of good, neuer his God greueth,
But folweth hym the full way, as he the folke taughte,
But to many maner of men, this matter is asked,
Both to lered and to lewed, that seyn that they liueden
Hollich on the grete God, and holden al his hestes,
But by a fraynyng for than, faileth ther manye

All.

For first I frayned the freres, and they me fulle tolden,
That al the fruyt of the fayth, was in her foure orders.
And the coffres of christendom, and the keie bothen
And the lock of byleue, lieth loken in her hondes.
¶ Then wennede I to wytten and with a whight I mette
A Minoure in a morwetide, and to this man I saide,
Sire for greate godes loue, the graith thou me tell,
Of what myddel erde man myght I best lerne.
My Crede, for I can it nought, my kare is the more,
And therfore for Christes loue, thy counseyl I preie
A Carm me hath ycouenant, ye nede me to teche,
But for thou knowest Carmes wel, thy counsail I aske.
¶ This Minour loked on me, and laughyng he sayde:
Leue christen man, I leue that thou madde.
Whough shulde thei techen the God, that con non hemselue?
They ben but iugulers, and iapers of kynde,
Lorels and lechures, and lemans holden,
Neyther in order ne out, but vnneth lybbeth,
And byiapeth the folk, with gestes of Rome.
It is but a faynt folke, yfounded vp on iapes,
They maketh hem Maries men, and so thei men tellen.
And leieth on oure lady many a long tale.
And that wicked folk wymmen betraieth,
And begileth hem of her good with glauerynge wordes.
And therwith holden her hous in haclotes warkes,
And so saue me god I hold it greate synne,
To gyuen hem any good, swiche glotones to fynde,
To mayntaynen swiche maner mē ȳ michel good destruieth
Yet seyn they in her sutiltie, to sottes in townes,
Thei comen out of Carmeli, Christ for to folwen.
And keyneth hem with holynesse, that yuele hem bisemeth.
Thei lyuen more in lecherie, and lyeth in her tales,

orites
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s.

Than suen any good liif, but lurken in her selles,
But wynnen werdliche good, and wasten it in synne.
And ghif thei couthen her Crede other on Christ leueden
Thei weren nought so hardy, swyche harlotri vsen.
Sikerli I can nought fynden who hem first founded,
But the foles foundeden hem selfe freres of the pye,
And maken hem mendynans, and marre the puple.
But what glut of tho gomes may any good kachen,
He wyl kepen it hem self, and cofrene it faste.
And thoigh his felawes fayle good, for hym he may steruen
Her monei mai by quest, and testament maken
And none obedience bere, but don as hym luste.
And ryght as Robartes men raken aboute
At feyres and at full ales, and fyllen the cuppe
And precheth al of pardon, to plesen the puple,
Her pacience is al pased, and put out to ferme
And pride is in her pouertie, that litel is to preisen.
And at the lullyng of oure lady, the wymmen to lyken
And miracles of mydwyues, and maken wymmen to wenen
That the lace of oure lady smok lighteth hem of children.
Thei ne prechen nought of Powel, ne penaunce for synne,
But al of merci and mensk, that Marie may helpen.
With sterne staues and stronge, thei ouer lond straketh,
Thider as here lemmans liggeth, and lurketh in townes.
Grey grete heded quenes, with gold by the eighen,
And seyne that her sustern thei ben, that soiurneth aboute.
And thus abouten the gon and godes folke be trayeth,
It is the puple that Powel preched of in his tyme.
He seyde of swich folke that so aboute wente,
Wepyng, I warne you of walkers aboute,
It beth enemyes of the cros that Christ vpon tho lede.
Swiche slomrers in slepe slaughte is her end,

And

And glotonye is het God, with gloppynge of dzynk
And gladneſſe in glees, and grete ioye ymaked
In the ſhendyng of ſwiche ſhal mychel folk lawghe.
Therfoze frend foz thy feith fond to don beter.
Leue nought on tho loſels, but let hem foꝛth paſen,
Foz ther ben fals in her faith, and feele mo otherer.
Alas frere, quath I tho, my purpos is ykailed,
Now is my comfoꝛt a caſt, canſtou no bote?
Wher I myght meten with a man that myghte me wyſſen
Foz to conne my Crede, Chriſt foz to folwen?
Certeyn felawe, quath the frere, withouten any faile
Minorites Of al men vpon mold, we Minorites moſt ſheweth
The pure apoſteles liif, with penance on erthe,
And ſuen hem in ſanctite, and ſufferen wel harde.
We haunten no tauernes, ne hobelen abouten
At marketes, and miracles we medeley vs neuer.
We hondlen no moneye, but monelich faren,
And hauen hunger at the mete, at ich a mel ones.
We hauen foꝛſaken the woꝛld, and in wo libbeth,
In penaunce and pouerte, and pꝛechethe the puple
By enſample of oure liif, ſoules to helpen
And in pouerte preien, foꝛ al oure parteneres
That gyueth vs any good, God to honouren
Other bel other book, oꝛ bꝛed to our foode,
Other catel other cloth, to coueren with oure bones:
Moneye, other money woꝛth, here mede is in heuen:
Foꝛ we buldeth a burwgh, a bꝛod and a large,
A chirch and a chapitle, with chaumbers a lofte.
With wide wyndowes ywꝛought, and walles wel heye
That mote ben poꝛtreid, and paint and pulched ful clene.
With gay glitering glas, glowyng as the ſunne,
And nighte ſtou amenden vs with moneye of thyn owen,

Thou chouldest knely bifore Christ in compas of gold,
In the wyde window westward wel neigh in the myddel,
And saint Fraunceis hym selfe, shal folden the in his cope,
And present the to the Trinite, and praye for thy synnes.
Thy name shal noblich ben wryten and wrought for ȳ nones
And in remembraunce of the, grad there for euere.
And brother be thou nought aferd, bythenk in thyne herte
Though thou conne nought thy Crede, care thou nomore
I shal asoilen the syr, and setten it on my soule.
And thou may maken this good, thenke thou non other.
¶ Sir (I sayde) in certaine I shal gon and assaye.
And he set on me his hond, and asoiled me clene,
And there I parted hun fro, wythouten any peyne,
In couenaunt that I come agayne, Christ he me be taught.
¶ Than saide I to my self: Here semeth litel treuthe,
First to blame his brother, and bakbyten hym foule,
There as curteis Christ clerliche sayde:
Whow myght thou in thy brothers eighe a bare mote loke,
And in thyn owen eighe nought a beme totene
See fyrst on thy self, and sithen on a nother,
And clense clene thy syght, and kepe wel thyne eighe,
And for another mannes eighe, ordeyne after.
And also I see coueitise catel to fongen,
That Christ hath clerliche forboden, and clenliche destruede
And sayde to hys sueres, forsothe on this wyse:
Nought thy neighbors good couepte in no tyme.
But charite and chastite, ben chased out clene.
But Christ seide by her frut, men shal hem ful knowen.
Thanne saide I certeine syr, thou demest ful trewe.
¶ Than thought I to fraine the first of this foure ordres,
And preched to the Prechoures, to prouen her wille.
I ch hyghed to her house, to herken of more,

And when I came to that court, I gaped aboute,
Swich a bild bold ybuld vpon erthe heighte,
Say I nought in certeyn sythe a long tyme.
I lemed opon that hous, and perne theron loked,
Whow the pileres weren ypaint, and pulchud ful clene.
And queyntly ycorven, with curious knottes,
With wyndowes wel ywrought, wyde vp alofte.
And thanne I entred in, and euen forth wente,
And al was walled that wone, though it wild were
With posternes in priuite, to pasen when hem liste.
Orcheyardes, and erberes eueled wel clene,
And a curious cros, craftly entayled,
With tabernacles ytight to toten al abouten.
The pris of a ploughlond, of penies so rounde
To aparaile that pyler, were pure litel,
Than I munte me forth, the mynstre to knowen.
And awaytede a woon, wonderly wel ybild,
With arches on euerich half, and bellyche ycorven
With crochetes on corneres, with knottes of gold.
Wyde wyndowes ywrought, ywrythen ful thikke,
Shynen with shapen sheldes, to shewen aboute
With merkes of merchauntes, ymedeled betwene.
Mo than twentie and two, twyse ynoumbred.
Ther is non heraud that hath half swich a rolle
Right as a rageman, hath rekned hem newe
Toumbes vpon tabernacles, tylde opon lofte,
Housed in hornes, harde set abouten
Of armede alabaustre, clad for the nones,
Maad opon marbel in many manner wyse
Knyghtes in ther contisante, clad for the nones
Alle it lemed seyntes, ysacred opon erthe
And louely ladies ywrought, leyen by her sydes

In manye gay garnemens, that weren gold beten,
Though the tax often yere were trewely ygadered,
Nolde it nought maken that hous, half as I trowe.
Than cam I to that cloystre, and gaped abouten,
Whough it was pitered and peynt, and portreyd wel clene
Al yhyled with leed, lowe to the stones,
And ypaued, with poyntyl, ich poynt after other
With cundites of clene tyn closed al aboute,
With lauoures of latun, loueliche ygreithed
I trowe the gaynage of the ground, in a gret shyre
Nold aparaile that place, oo poynt tyl other ende.
Thãne was ȳ chapitre house wrought as a greet chirche,
Coruen and couered, and queyntelyche entayled
With semliche selure yseet on lofte
As a parlement hous ypeynted aboute.
Thanne ferd I in to fraytoure, and fond there a nother,
In halle for an hygh kynge an household to holden,
With brode bordes abouten, ybenched wel clene,
With wyndowes of glaas, wrought as a chirche.
Than walkede I ferrer, and went al abouten
And seigh halles ful heygh, and houses ful noble,
Chambres with chymeneys, and chapeles gaye,
And kychenes for an high kynge, in casteles to holden.
And her dortoure ydight, with dores ful stronge
Fermerye and fraitur, with fele mo houses
And al strong ston wal sterne opon heithe
With gaye garites, and grete, and iche hole yglased.
And other houses ynowe, to herberwe the queene
And yet thise bilderes wiln beggen, a bagge ful of whete
Of a pure pore man, that may onethe paye
Half his rent in a yere, and half ben byhynde.
¶ Than turned I ayen whan I hadde al ytoted

And fond in a freitoure, a frere on a benche
A greet chorl and a grym, growen as a tonne,
With a face so fat, as a ful bleddere.
Blowen bretful of breth, and as a bagge bonged.
On bothen his chekes, and his chyn, with a chol lolkede
So greet as a gos ey, growen al of grece.
That al wagged his fleisch, as a quick inyte,
His cope that bitlypped hym, wel clene was it folden
Of double worstede ydyght, doun to the hele.
His kyrtel of clene whit, clenlyche ysewed
Hit was good ynow of ground, greyn for to beren.
I haylsede that hirdinan, and hendlich I sayde,
Gode sire for godesloue, canstou me graith tellen.
To any worthely wight, that willen me couthe.
Whew I shulde conne my Crede, Christ for to folwe,
That lenede lelliche hym selfe, and lyuede therafter,
That feynede no falshede, but fully Christ suwede.
For sich a certeyn man syker wold I trosten
That he wolde telle me the trewthe, and turne to non other.
And an Austyn this ender day, egged me faste
That he wolde techen me wel, he plyght me his treuthe
And seyde me certeyn, syghthen Christ deyed
Oure ordre was euelles, and erst yfounde.
Thirst felawe quath he, fy on his pilche
He is but aboztiif, eked with cloutes.
He holdeth his ordynaunce with hores and theues,
And purchaseth hem pryuyleges, with penyes so rounde.
It is a pur pardoners craft, proue and asay
For haue they thy money, a moneth therafter
Certes theigh thou come agen, he wil the nought knowen.
But felawe oure foundement was first of the othere
And we ben founded fulliche, withouten fayntise

And we ben clerkes ycnowen, cunnyng in schole
Proued in processyon by processe of lawe.
Of oure order ther beth Bichopes wel manye,
Seyntes on sundri stedes, that suffreden harde.
And we ben proued the prits of Popes at Rome
And of grettest degre, as godspelles telleth.
¶ I syre quath I thanne, thou seyst a grete wonder
Sithen Christ sayd hym selfe, to alle his diciples:
Which of you that is most, most shal he werche,
And who is goere bykome, first shal he seruen.
And seyde, he saugh Satan sytten ful heyghe,
And fullow ben yleid. In lykneſſe he tolde
That in pouernesse of spyrit, is spedfullest hele.
And, Hertes of heyne harmeth the soule.
And therefore frere farewel, here fynd I but pride.
I preise nought thy prechyns, but as a put myte.
¶ And angerich I wandrede the Austyns to proue
And mette with a maistre of tho men, and meklich I seyde:
Maistre, for the moder loue, that Marie men calleth,
Knowest thou ought there thou comest, a creature on erthe
That coude me my Crede teche, and trewelich enfourme
Withouten flateryng fare, and nothing feyne,
That folweth fulliche the feith, and non other fables
Withouten gabynge of glose, as the godspelles telleth?
I Minoure hath me holly behyght, to helen my soule,
For he seith, that her secte is sykerest on erthe,
And ben kepers of the keye that Chrystendom helpeth
And puriche in pouerte, the Apostles they suweth.
Allaas quath the frere, almost I madde in myn de
To sen hough this Minoures, many men bygyleth.
Sothly somme of tho gomes, hath more good hym selue
Than ten knyghtes that I knowe, of catel in cofres.

In fraytoure they faren best, of al the foure ordres
And blun ypocricie in al that thei werchen
And prechen al of perfitnesse: but loke now If the prey,
Nought but profre hem in priuite, a peny for a masse,
And (but his name be Pers)put out myn eighe
Though he had moremoney hid,than marchauntes of wolle.
Loke hough this lorelinen lordes betrayen
Seyn that they folwen, fully Fraunceyses rewle
That in cotinge of his cope,is more cloth yfolden
Than was in Fraunceis froc, whan he hem first made,
And yet vnder that cope,a cote hath he furred
With foyns,or with fichewes,other fyn beuere.
And that is cutted to the kne, and queyntly ybotend
Lest any spiritual man,aspie that gyle.
Fraunceys bad his brethern barfot to wenden
Now han they buclede shone,for blemyng of her heles
And hosen in harde weder,yhamled by the ancle.
And spicerie sprad in her purs,to parten where hem luste.
Lordes loueth hem wel,for they so lowe crouchen
But knowen men her cautel,and her queynte wordes
Thei wolde worshypen hem, nought but alitle:
The ymage of ypocricie ymped vpon kendes.
But sone gyf thou wilt ben leker,seche thou no ferther
We freres beth the firste, and founden vpon treuthe.
Paule primus heremite,put vs hym selue
Awey into wildernesse,the world to despisen.
And there we lengeden ful long, and leueden ful harde
For to alle this Freren folke,weren founden in tounes,
And taughten vntrewely,and that we wel aspiede.
And for chef charyte,we chargeden vs seluen
In amendyng of this men,we maden oure celles
To ben in cytes yset,to styghtle the puple.

Prechyng and prayeng as profetes shoulden
And so we holden vs, the hetheued of al holy chirche.
We han power of the Pope purliche assoylen
Al that helpen oure hous, in helpe of her soules.
To dispensen hem with, in dedes of synne,
Al that amendeth oure hous, in money other elles
With corne other catel, or clothes to beddes
Other bedys or broche, or breed for our fode.
And gif thou hast any good, and wilt thy self helpen
Help vs hertelich therwith, and here I vndertake
Thou shalt ben brother of oure hous, and a boke habben
As the nexte chapitre clerliche enseled.
And than oure Prouincial hath power to assoylen
Alle sustren and bretheren, that beth of oure ordre.
And though thou come nought the Crede, knele doun here
My soule I sette for thyn, to asoile the clene,
In couenaunt that thou come ageyne, and katel vs bringe.
And thanne loutede I adoun, and he me leue grauntede
And so I parted hym fro, and the frere lefte.
¶ Than seide I to my self: here is no bote,
Here pride, is the Pater noster in preying of synne.
Her Crede is coueytise, now can I no ferthere.
Yet wil I fonden forth, and fraynen the Carmes:
Than toted I in to a tauerne, and there I aspyede
Two frere Carmes, with a ful coppe.
There I auntrede me in, and aslliche I seyde:
Leue sire for the lordes loue, that thou on leuest,
Lere me to som man my Crede for to lerne,
That lyueth in lel lif, and loueth no synne,
And gloseth nought the godspel, but halt godes hetes,
And neyther money ne mede, ne may hym nought letten
But werchen after godes word, withouten any faile.

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A prechoure yprokessed, hath plight me his trwethe
To techen me trewely, but wouldest thou me tellen
For they ben certeyne men, and syker on to trosten
I woulde quitten the thy mede, as my myght were.
¶ A tresse quath he trewely, his treweth is ful litel
He dynede nought with Dominic, sithe Christ deide.
For with the prynces of pryde, the Prechours dwellen.
Thei ben so digne as the deuel that droppeth fro heuen
With hartes of heynesse, whough halwen the cherches
And deleth in deuynyte, as dogges doth bones.
Thei medeleth with mesages, and mariages of grete,
Thei leeuen with lordes with lesynges ynowe.
Thei biggeth hem bichopriches with bagges of gold,
Thei wilneth worchipes: but waite on eer dedes
Harkne at Herdforthe, how that they werchen,
And loke when that they lyuen and leeue as thou fyndest.
They ben counseylours of kynges, Christ wot the sothe
Whou thei cureth kynges, and her bak claweth.
God leue hem leden wel, in lyuynge of heuene,
And glose hem nought for her good, to greuen her soules.
I pray the where ben they pryue with any pore whightes,
That may nought amenden her hous, ne amenden heinselue.
They prechen in proud herte, and preyseth her ordre,
And werdlich worchype, wilneth in erthe
Leeue it wel lef man: And men right lokede,
There is more pryue pryde in prechoures hertes
Than there lefte in Lucifere, or he were lowe fallen.
They bene dygne as dichwatere, that dogges in bayteth
Loka ribaut of hem that can nought wel reden
His Rewel, ne his Respondes but be pure rote.
Als as he were a connyng clerk, he casteth the lawes
Nought lowly but lordly, and lesynges lyeth

For ryght as Mynoures most hypocrite vseth
Ryght so ben prechoures proude, puriche in herte.
¶ But chrysten creatoure, we Carmes firste comen
Euen in Elyes tyme, first of hem alle
And lyuen by oure lady, and lelly her seruen
In clene commun lif kepen vs out of lynne
Nowt proude as Prechoures beth, but preyen ful stylle
For all the soules, and the lyues, that we by libbeth.
We couuen on no quentyse, Christ wot the southe,
But bisyeth vs in oure bedes, as vs best holdeth
And therfore leeue leelman, leeue that iche sygge
I masse of vs meene men, is of more mede
And passeth alle prayers, of this proude freres.
And thou wylt ghyuen vs any good, I wolde ye here graunte
To taken al thy penaunce, in peril of my soule.
And though thou conne nought thy Crede, clene the assoyle
So ỳ thou mowe amende oure house with money other elles
With som Catel, other corn, or cuppes of syluere.
¶ Trewely frere quath I tho, to tellen the the sothe
There is no peny in my pakke to payen for my mete.
I haue no good ne no golde, but go thus abouten
And trauaile ful trewely, to wynnen with my fode.
But woldest thou for godes loue, lerne me my Crede
I shulde don for the wil, whan I wele hadde.
¶ Trewely quath the frere, a fole I the holde.
Thou woldest nought wetten thy fote & woldest fich kachen
Oure pardon and oure preieres, so beth they nought parten
Oure power lasteth nought so feer, but we som peny fongen
¶ Fare wel quath the frere, for I mot hethen fonden
And hyen to an housewif, that hath vs byquethen
Ten pound in hir testament, to tellen the sothe,
Ho drawеth to the dethward: but yet I am in drede

Lest

Lest ho turne hire testament: and therfore I hyghe
To hauen hire to oure hous: and henten gif I mighte
An anuel for myne owen vse, to helpen to clothe.
Godys forbode quath his felawe: but ho forth passe
Whil ho is in purpos, with vs to departen
God let hir no lengere lyuen, for letteres ben manye.
¶ Thanne turnede I me forth, and talked to myselfe
Of the falshede of this folke, whow feythles thei weren
And as I wente by the way, wepynge for sorowe
And seigh a sely man me by, opon the plough hongen.
His cote was of a cloute that cary was ycalled,
is hod was ful of holes, and his heare oute,
ith his knoppede shon clouted ful thykke,
ton toteden out, as he the lond tredede.
hosen ouer hongen his hokshynes, on euerich a syde
omered in fen, as he the plow folwede.
myteynes as meter maad al of cloutes,
gres weren forwerd, and ful of fen honged.
t waselede in the feen, almost to the ancle
eren hym byforne, that feble were worthi,
reknen ich a ryb, so rentful they weren
ed hym with, with a long gode
te cutted ful heyghe,
nwe shete, to weren hire fro wederes,
iis, that the blod folwede,
de lath a little crom bolle
el chylde lapped in cloutes,
e yeres olde, opon a nother syde,
gen o songe, that sorwe was to heren
eden alle o cry, a kareful note.
ne sely man sighed sore, and seyde, children beth stille.
his man lokede opon me, and leet the plough stonden

And seyde: Sely man, whi syghest thou so harde
Gif the lakke liiflode, lene the ich wille,
Swich good as god hath sent, go we leeue brother.
¶ I sayde thanne: Nay syre, my sorowe is wel more
For I can nought my Crede, I care wel harde
For I can fynden no man, that fulli byleueth
To techen me the heyghe weie, and therfore I wepe.
For I haue fondes the freres of the foure ordres
For there I wende haue wist, but now my wit lakketh
And al myn hope was on hem, and myn herte also,
But thei ben fulli faithles, and the fend sueth.
¶ A brother quath he tho, beware of tho foles.
For Christ seyde hymself, of swhiche I you warne
And false profetes in the feith, he fulliche hem calde,
In vestimentis ouium, but only with inne
They ben wilde werwolues, that wiln the folke robben.
The fen founded hem first, the feyth to distrie
And by his craft thei comen in, to combren the chirche.
By the couetise of his craft, the curates to helpen
But nowe they hauen an hold, they harmen ful manye
They don nought after Dominik, but dreccheth the puple.
Ne folwen nought Fraunceis, but falsliche lybben.
And Austynes rewle they rekeneth but a fable,
But purchaseth hem priuilege of Popes at Rome.
They coueten confessiones to kachen some hyre
And sepulturus also, somme wayten to lacchen,
But other cures of Christen, they coueten nought to haue
But there as wynnynge liith, he loketh non other.
¶ Whough shal I nemne thy name, ẏ neyghbores ẏ callethe
Peres quath he the pore man, the plough man I hatte.
¶ A Peres quath I tho, I pray the thou me telle
More of thise trysters, hou trechurly they libbeth

For ichon of hem hath tolde me, a tale of that other,
Of her wikked lif, in werld that he liveth.
I trowe that som wicked wight, wrought this ordres:
Trow ye that gleym of that gest, that Golias is ycald,
Other els Satan hym self: sente hem fro helle,
To combren men with her crafte, Christendoume to shenden.
Dere brother quath Peres, the Deuel is ful queynte,
To encombren holy chirche, he casteth ful harde
And slurcheth his falsnesse, opon fele wise,
And fer he casteth to forn, the folk to dystroye.
LIM. Of the kynrede of Cayn, he cast the freres,
And founded hem on Saryenes, feyned for God.
But they with her falshe faith, mychel folk shendeth
Christ calde hem hymself kynd Ypocrites:
How often he curseth hem, wel can I tellen.
He seide ons hym self, to that sory puple:
Wo worthe you wyghtes, wel lerned of the lawe.
Eft he seyde to hem selfe, Wo mote you worthen
That the toumbes of prophetes tildeth vp heighe
Youre faderes forfeden hem, and to dyeth hem brought.
Here I touche this two, thynner hem I thenke,
Who wilneth be wiser of lawe, then lewede freres
And in multitude of men, ben maistres ycalled.
And wilneth worshyp of the werld, and sytten with heye,
And leueth louyng of God, and lowneſſe byhynde.
And in beldyng of toumbes, thei traueileth grete
To chargen her chirche store, and chaungen it ofte.
And the fader of the freres, desouled her soules
That was the dyggyng deuel, that drencheth men ofte.
The Deuel by his dotage, dissaueth the chirche
And put in the Prechoures, ypaynted withouten
And by his queyntise they comen in, the Curates to helpen

But

But that harmed hem harde, and halp hem ful littel.
But Austynes ordinaunce was on a good treuthe
And also Dominikes dedes weren dernelich ylsed.
And Fraunceis founded his folke fulliche on treuthe
Pure parfit prestes, in penaunce to libben.
In loue and in lowneſſe, and lettynge of pryde
Grounded on the godspel, as god baad hym selue.
But now the glose is so greet in gladdyng tales
That turneth vp twofold vnteyned vpon treuthe.
That they ben curſed of Christ I can hem wel proue
Withouten his blissyng bare beth thei in her werkes.
For Christ seyde hymselfe to swiche as hym folwede.
Yblissed mot they ben, that mene ben in soule:
And alle power in gost, God hym self blisseth:
Whou fele freres fareth so, fayne wolde I knowe.
Proue hem in proces, and pynch at her ordre,
And deme hem after that the don, and dredles pleue
Thei wiln weron pure wroth wonderliche sone,
And shewen the a sharp wil, in a short tyme.
To wiln wilfully wrathe, and werche ther after,
Wytnes on Wyclif, that warned hem with trewthe. Wicle
For he in goodnesse of gost, graythliche hem warned
To waynen her wikednesse, and werkes of synne.
Whou sone this sorimen sewed hys soule
And oueral lolled hym with heritikes werkes:
And so of the blissyng of god thei bereth little mede.
¶ Afterward an other, onliche he blissede
The meke of the myddel erde through myght of his fader.
Fynd foure freres in a flok, that folweth that rewle
Than haue I tynt al my tast, touche, and assaye.
Lakke hem a littel wight, and her lif blamen
But he lepe vp on heigh, in hardenesse of herte.

And neinne the anon nought, and thy name lakke
With proude wordes apert that passeth his rewle.
Bothe with thou leyst, and thou lext in heyneſſe of ſowle
And turmen as a tyrant, that turmenteth hym ſelue.
A lord were iother, for to leyne a knaue
Thanne ſwhich a begger the beſt in a toun.
Loke now leue man, beth nought thiſe ylyke
Fully to the Phariſens, in tele of theſe poyntes
Al her brad beldyng, ben belded with ſynne.
And in worſhipe of the world, here wymmyng they holden,
They ſhapen her chapolories, and ſtretchet hem brode
And lanneeth heighe her hemmes, with babelyng in ſtretes.
They ben ylewed with whight ſilke, and ſemes ful queynte
Ystongen with ſtiches, that ſtareth as ſyluer.
And but freres ben fyrſt ylet, at ſopers, and at feſtes.
They wiln ben wonderly wroth ywis (as I trowe)
But they ben at the lordes borde, louren they wylleth.
He mot bygynne that bord, a beggere with ſorowe.
And firſt ſitten in ſe, in her ſynagoges,
That beth her heigh helle hous, of Caymes kynd.
For though a man in her mynſtre a maſſe wolde heren
His ſight ſhal ſo bylet on ſondrye werkes,
The penonnes and the pomels, and poyntes of ſhelues
With drawen his deuocion, and duſken his herte.
I likene it to a limyerde, to drawen men to helle.
And to worſhipe of the fend, to wrathen the ſoules.
And alſo Chriſt him ſelf ſeide to ſwhich ypocrites,
He loueth in marketes ben met, wit greynges of pouere
And lowynge of lewed men, in lentenes tyme
For thei han of Biſchopes ybought with her propre ſiluer
And purchaſed of penaunce the puple to aſoyle:
But money may maken meſure of the peyne.

After

After that his power is to payen, his penaunce shal fayle.
God leue it be a good help, for hele of the soules.
And also this myster men ben maysters icalled
That the genitil Jesus generalliche blamed.
And that poynt to his apostles purly defended.
But freres hauen forgeten this, and the fend suweth
He that maystri loued Lucifer the olde.
Where Fraunceys or Dominik, other Austyn ordeynde
Any of this dotardes doctur to worthe,
Maysters of diuinite her matynes to leue.
And cherlich as a cheueteyn, hys chaumbre to holden
With chymene, and thaple and chosen whan hem lyste
And serued as a souereyn, and as a lord sytten.
Swich a goune godes wordes, grysliche gloseth
I trowe he toucheth nought the text, but taketh it for a tale.
God forbad to his folk, and fullyche defendede
They shoulden nought stodyen bitorne ne sturrē her wyttes
But sodenly the same word, with here mouth shewe
That weren giuen hem of God, thorugh gost of hem selue.
Now mot a frere studyen, and stumlen in tales
And leuen his matynes, and no masse syngen
And loken hem lefynges, that liketh the puple
To purchasen hym his pursful, to paye for the drynke.
And brother when bernes ben ful, and holy tyme passed
Thanne comen cursed freres, and croucheth ful lowe
As losel, a lymytour, ouer al the lond lepeth.
And loke that he leue non hous, that somwhat he ne laiche
And there thet gylen hem self, and godes word turneth.
Bagges and beggyng he bad his folke leuen,
And only seruen hym self, and his ruwel sechen
And al that nedly nedeth, that shulden hem nought lakken.
Wherto beggen thise men, and ben nought so feble?

Hem fayleth no furryng, ne clothes atte fulle,
But for a lustful liif in lustes to dwellen.
Withouten any trauail, vntrulych libbeth
Thei beth nought maymed men, ne no mete lakketh.
Thei clothed in curious cloth, and clenliche arayed
It is a laweles liif, as lordynges vsen
Nether ordeyned in ordre, but onethe libbeth.
¶ Christ bad blissen bodies on erthe
That wepen for wikkednesse, that he byforn wroughte.
That ben fewe of tho freres, for thei ben nere dede
And put al in purclath, with pottes on her hedes.
Thanne he wari eth, and wepeth and wicheth after heuen,
And fyeth on her falshedes, that thei before deden.
And therfore of that blissyng, trewely (as I trowe)
Thei may trussen her part, in a terre powghe.
¶ Alle tho blissed beth, that bodyliche hongreth.
That ben the pore penyles, that han ouer passed
The poynt of her pris liif, in penaunce of werkes
And mown nought swynken ne sweten, but ben swith feble
Other mayned at meschef, or meseles lyke
And her god is a gon, and greueth hem to beggen.
Ther is no frere in feith, that fareth in this wyse
But he may beggen his bred, his bed is ygreithed.
Under a pothe shall be put, in a pryuye chaumbre,
That he shal lyuen ne last, but lytel whyle after.
Almyghti God and man, the merciable and blessed
That han mercy on men that misdon hem here.
But who so forgabbed a frere, yfounden at the stues
And brought blod of his bodi, on bak, or on syde.
Hym were asgood greuen a grete lord of rentes.
He shoulde sonnere ben shryuen, shortly to tellen,
Though he kilde a comly knyght, and compasd his mother,

Thennne a buffet to beden, a beggere frere.
¶ The clene hertes, Christ he curteyliche blissed
That coueten no catel but Christes fulle blysse.
That leueth fulliche on God, and lelliche thenketh
On his lore and his lawe, and lyueth opon trewthe.
Freres han forgetten this, and folweth an other
That they may henten they holden, by hirneth it sone.
Here hertes ben clen yhid, in her heighe cloystre
As curres from careyne, that is cast in diches.
¶ And parfiit Christ, the pesible blissede
That ben suffrant, and sobre, and susteyne anger.
A say of her sobernesse, and thou might yknowen
Ther ne is no waspe in this world that wil folloke styngen
For stappyng on a too, of a styncand frere.
For neyther soueren ne seget, thei ne suffereth neuer
Al thei blessyng of god, beouten thei walken
For of her suffraunce forsothe men sey but lytel.
¶ Alle that persecution in pure liif suffren
They han the beneson of God, blissed in erthe.
I pray parceyue now the pursut of a frere,
In what mesure of mekenesse, thise men deleth.
Byhold opon Water Brut whou bisiliche thei pursueden Water Brute.
For he seid hem the sothe: and yet syre ferther
Hy may no more marren hem, but men telleth
That he is an heritik, and yuele byleueth
And precheth it in pulpit, to blenden the puple.
They wolden awyrien that wight for his wel dedes
And so they chewen charite, as chewen shaf houndes.
And thei pursueth the pouere, and passeth pursutes
Bothe they wyln and thei wolden yworthen so grete
To passen any manes myght, to mortheren the soules.
First to brenne the body, in a bale of fur

And

And sythen the sely soule slen, and senden hyre to helle.
And Christ clerly forbad his christene, and defended
They shoulden nought after the face, neuer the folke demen.
¶ Sire I seide my self thou semest to blamen.
Why dispisest thou thus thise sely pore freres
None other men so mychel Monkes ne prestes,
Chanons ne Charthous, that in chirche serueth
It semeth that thise sely men han somwhat the greued,
Other with word, or with werk, and therfore thou witnest
To shenden other shamen hem with the sharp speche
And hamen holliche, and her hous greuen.
¶ I prey the quath Peres, put that out of thy mynde.
Certeyn for soule hele, I say the this wordes.
I preise nought pocessioneres, but pur lytel,
For falshed of freres, hath fulliche encombred
Manye of this maner men, and maad hem to leuen
Her charite and chastete, and shosen hem to lustes
And waren to werly, and waynen the trewethe
And leuen the loue of her god, and the werld seruen.
But for falshed of freres, I sele in my soule
Seyng the synful lif, that forweth myn herte
How they ben clothed in cloth, that clennest sheweth.
For Angeles and Archangeles, alle they whit vseth
And al aldremen that ben ante thronum.
Thise tokenes hauen freres taken, but I trowe that a feme
Folwen fully that cloth, but falsyche that vseth.
For whit in trowthe hy tokeneth, clennes in soule:
Gif he haue vndernethen whit, thanne he aboue wereth
Black that betokeneth bale, for oure synne
And mournyng for mysdede, of hem that this vseth,
And sorwe for synful lif, so that cloth asketh.
I trowe there ben nought ten freres that for synne weyen,

For

For that lict is her lust, and therby thi libben
In fraytour and in fermori, her fostryng is synne.
It is her mete at iehe a mel, her most sustinaunce.
Herkne opon Hildegare, hou homlich he telleth
How her sustinaunce is synne. and syker (as I trowe)
Weren her confessiones, clenly destrued
Hy shoulde nought beren hem so brag, ne belden so heyghe.
For the fallyng of synne socoreth the foles
And begileth the grete, with glauerynge wordes.
With glosyng of godspels, thei godes word turneth
And pasen al the pryuylege, that Peter after vsed.
The power of the Apostles, thei pasen in speche
For to fellen the synnes, for seluer other mede.
And purliche A pena the puple asoyleth
And a Culpa also, that they may kachen
Money other money worth, and mede to fonge
And ben at lone and at bode, as burgeises vseth.
Thus they seruen Sathanas, and soules bygyleth
Marchannes of malisones, mansede wrecches.
Thei vsen russet also some of this freres
That betokeneth trauaile, and treuth vpon erthe.
But loke whou this lorels laboren the erthe
But freten the fruyt that the folke ful lellich beswynketh.
With trauail of trewe men thei tymbren her houses
And of the curiouse cloth her copes they beggen
And als his gettyng is greete, he shal ben good holden.
And right as dranes doth nought but drynketh vp the huny
Whan been with her busynes haus brought it to hepe.
Right so fareth freres, with folk opon erthe:
They freten vp the firste froyt, and falsliche lybbeth.
But alle freres eten nought ylych good mete,
But after that his wynnyng is, is his welfare:

And after that he bringeth hom his bed shal ben graythed
And after that his richesse is raught he shal ben redy serued.
But se thi self in thi sight, whou somme of hem walketh
With clouted shon, and clothes ful feble.
Wel neigh forwerd, and the wlon offe
And his felawe in a frok, worth swhich fiftene
Arayd in rede stone and elles were renthe
And sexe copes or seuen in his celle hongeth
Though for fayling of good, his felawe shulde sterue.
He wolde nought leuen hym a peny his liif for to holden
I myght tymen tho troiflardes. to toylen with the erthe
Tylyen, and trewlich lyuen, and her flesh tempren.
Now met ich soutere hys sone setten to schole
And ich a beggeres brol, on the book lerne.
And worth to a writere, and with a lorde dwelle
Other falsly to a frere the fend for to seruen
So of that beggares brol, an Abbot shal worthen
Among the Peres of the lond prese to sytten
And lordes sones lowly to tho losels aloute
Knyghtes crouketh hem to, and cruccheth ful lowe
And his syre a soutere, yfuled in grees.
His teeth with toylyng of lether, tatered as a sawe.
Alaas that lordes of the londe leueth swiche wrechen
And leueth swych lorels, for her lowe wordes.
They shulden maken Abbots her owen bretheren childre
Other of some gentil blod, and so yt best semed
And fostre none faytoures, ne swich false freres
To maken fat and fulle and her flesh combren.
For her kynde were more to yclense diches
Than ben to sopers yset first, and serued with syluer.
A grete bolle ful of beuen, were beter in hys wombe
And with the bandes of bakun his baly for to fillen.

Thin

Then pertryches, or plouers, or pecokes rosted
And comeren her stomakes with curiuse drynkes
That maketh swyche harlotes hordom vsen
And with her wikked word wymmen bitrayeth.
God wold her wonynge were in wilderneſſe
And fals freres forboden, the fayre ladis chaumbres.
For knewe lordes her craft treuly I trowe
They shulden nought haunten her house, so hõly on nyghtes.
Ne bedden swich brothels, in so brode shetes
But sheten her heued in the stre, to sharpen her wittes.
Ne bẽ kynges confessours of custom, ne ẏ coũsel of ẏ rewme
For Fraunceis founded hẽ nought, to farẽ on ẏ wise. (knowe
Ne Dompnyk dued heim neuere swyche drynkers to worthe,
Ne Helye ne Iustyn swyche lif neuer vsed
But in pouert of spirit, spended her tyme.
We haue seyn our self in a short tyme.
Whou freres wolden no flesh among the folk vsen,
But now the harlotes han hyd thilke reule,
And for the loue of oure lord han leyd hire in water.
Weneſt thou ther wolde so fele swich warlawes worthen
Ne were werliche wele, and her welfare
Thei shulden deluen, and dyken, and dongen the erthe
And menemong corn breed, to her mete kongen
And wortes flesshles wrought, and water to drynken,
And werchen and wolward gon, as we wrecches vsen
An aunter gif ther wolde on, among an hol hundred
Lyuen so for godes loue, in tyme of a wyntere.
Leue Peres quath he tho, I pray that thou me telle
Whou I may conne my Crede, in Christen byleue.
Leue brother quath I, hold that I segge
I wil techen the the trouthe, and tellen the the sothe.

¶ Leue thou in oure louerd god, that al the werld wrought
de. Holy heuen eth on bey, holliche he fourmede
And is almyghti hym self, ouer alle his werkes.
And wrought as is wil was, the werld, and the heuen.
And on gentil Jesu Christ, engendred of him seluen
His owen onlyche sone, lord ouer all yknowen.
That was clenlich conceiued clerli in trewthe
Of the heye holy gost, this is the holy beleue.
And of the maiden Marye, man was he born
With outen synful seed, this is fully the byleue.
With thorn ycrouned, crucified, and on the cros dyede.
And sythen his blessed body was in a stone byried.
And descended a doun to the derk helle.
And fet out oure formfaderes, and hy ful fayn weren.
The thyrd day redeliche hym self ros fram deeth.
And on a ston there he stod, he steigh vp to heuene
And on his fader ryght hand, redelich he sitteth,
That almyghti god ouer alle other whyghtes.
And is herafter to commen, Christ all him seluen
To demen the quyke and the dede, with outen any doute.
And in the heighe holy gost, holly I beleue.
And generall holy chirche also hold this in the mynde.
The comm union of sayntes for soth I to the sayn.
And for our great sinnes forgiuenes for to getten
And only by Christ clenlich to be clensed.
Our bodies again to risen right as we been here
And the liif euerlasting leue iche to hab ben. Amen.
Al though this flatterynge freres wyln for her pryde
Disputen of Godes deyte, as dotardes shuiden
The more the matere is moued, the masedere hy worthen.
Lat the loseles alone, and leue thou the trewthe
For these maystres of dyuynite manye als I trowe

Folwen

Folwen nought fully the feith, as fele of the lewede.
Whough may mannes wiit, through werk of him selue
Knowen Christes priuite, that alle kynde passethe
It mot ben a man, of also mek an herte
That myght with his good liif, the holy goft fongen.
And thanne nedeth him nought, neuere for to ſtudyen
He myght no maiſtre ben cald, for christ ȳ defended
Ne puten no pylion on his pild pate
But prechen in parfit liif, and no pryde vſen
But al that euer I haue ſeyd, ſoth it me ſemeth,
And al that euere I haue wryten, is ſoth as I trowe.
And for amendyng of thiſe men, is moſt that I write
God wolde hy wolden ben war, and werchen the betere.
But for I am a lewed man, paraunter I myghte
Paſſen par aduenture, and in ſome poynt erren
I wil nought this matere maiſtrely avowen.
But gif ich haue myſſaid, mercy ich aſke
And pray al mannere men, this matere amende
Iche a word by hym ſelf, and al gif it nedeth.
God of his grete myght and his good grace
Saue alle freres, that feithfulli lybben
And alle tho that ben fals fayre hem amende
And gyue hem wiit, and good wil ſwiche dedes to werch
That thei may wynnen the liif, that euere ſhal leſten.

Amen.

FINIS.

For to occupie this leaffe which els shuld haue ben vacant, I haue made an interpretation of certayne hard wordes vsed in this booke for the better vnderstandyng of it.

Frayning, forsakyng
Wunede, wont
Graith, truth
Erde, erth
Leue, beleue
God, good
Byiapeth, deceiueth
Glauerynge, flattering
Puple, people
Cholede, suffered
Glees, playes
Hobelen, skipping
Monelich, monylesse
Pulched, polished
Mightestou, mihgiest thou
Semed, gased
yerne, ofte
Queintly, strangely
Pure, very
Munte, went
Bellich, well
Tild, set
Hyrnes, caues
Feele, many
Ey, egge
Lellich, truely
Egged, moued
Theigh, though
Loresmen, learned men
Stightle, stay
Cherlich, gladly
Louted, bowed
Preing, praisyng
Fonden, walk
Halt, kept
Hetes, commaundements
Sigge, say
Ho, she
Rothtren, oxon
Dreccheth, drouneth
Lacchen, catchen
Lakke, Blame
Yerd, rodde
Mystremen, nedy men
Terre poughe, tar box
Prislilf, cheif or young
Forgabbed, belyed
Waynen, banysh

The residue the diligent reader shall (I trust) well ynough perceiue.

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